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Cassis proposes model pretrial services program ***Cost savings and safety are top priority***

Lansing – State Sen. Nancy Cassis, R-Novi, has introduced legislation that would establish a model pretrial services program in Michigan.

“This model program is based on a comprehensive, positive and structured approach to handling defendants as they await trial,” Cassis said. “It provides local officials with a way to safely and responsibly deal with issues such as overcrowding and limited resources in jails.”

Senate Bill 968 was drafted after Cassis was contacted by Novi City Councilman Bob Gatt, who works for Oakland County Community Corrections. It is based on language crafted by members of the National Association of Pre-Trial Services Agencies.

It would provide a model for counties and regions seeking to develop local programs that encourage cost-efficiency and create bed space in overcrowded jails while keeping public safety a top priority. Because the bill simply creates a model act, there is no mandate and therefore no cost.

Pretrial services programs investigate and supervise defendants awaiting trial. Such programs are proven to be effective tools for reducing crimes committed by people awaiting trial.

“The program Senator Cassis proposes gives solid direction to cities and counties that have – or would like to have – pretrial services programs,” said Barb Hankey, Oakland County’s manager of community corrections. “It’s also a morale issue. For the first time, individuals who work in the pretrial services field will be statutorily recognized as part of the court process.”

“In tough budget times, we must all pull together, share critical information and be creative about cost-savings while making the health, safety and welfare of Michigan families the highest priority,” said Cassis.

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